MISCELLANIES.

THE PARADISE OF WOMEN, FROM "ALCUIN."

DIALOGUE ON MUSIC.

DIALOGUE ON PAINTING.

THE PARADISE OF WOMEN.

I called last evening on Mrs. Carter. I had no previous acquaintance with her. Her brother is a man of letters, who, nevertheless, finds little leisure from the engagements of a toilsome profession. He scarcely spends an evening at home, yet takes care to invite specially and generally every one who enjoys the reputation of learning and probity. His sister became, on the death of her husband, his housekeeper. She was always at home. The guests who came in search of the man, finding him abroad, lingered a little, as politeness enjoined, but soon found something in the features and accents of the lady, that induced them to prolong their stay, for their own sake: nay, without any well-defined expectation of meeting their inviter, they felt themselves disposed to repeat their visit. We must suppose the conversation of the lady not destitute of attractions; but an additional, and, perhaps, the strongest inducement, was the society of other visitants. The house became, at length, a sort of rendezvous of persons of

different ages and conditions, but respectable for talents or virtues. A commodious apartment, excellent tea, lemonade, and ice—and wholesome fruits—were added to the pleasures of instructive society: no wonder that Mrs. Carter's *coterie* became the resort of the liberal and ingenious.

These things did not necessarily imply any uncommon merit in the lady. Skill in the superintendence of a tea-table, affability and modesty, promptness to inquire, and docility to listen, were all that were absolutely requisite in the mistress of the ceremonies. Her apartment was nothing, perhaps, but a Lyceum open at stated hours, and to particular persons, who enjoyed, gratis, the benefits of rational discourse, and agreeable repasts. Some one was required to serve the guests, direct the menials, and maintain, with suitable vigilance, the empire of cleanliness and order. This office might not be servile, merely because it was voluntary. The influence of an unbribed inclination might constitute the whole difference between her and a waiter at an inn, or the porter of a theatre.

Books are too often insipid. In reading, the senses are inert and sluggish, or they are solicited by foreign objects. To spur up the

flagging attention, or check the rapidity of its flights and wildness of its excursions, are often found to be impracticable. It is only on extraordinary occasions that this faculty is at once sober and vigorous, active and obedient. The revolutions of our mind may be watched and noted, but can seldom be explained to the satisfaction of the inquisitive. All that the caprice of nature has left us, is to profit by the casual presence of that which can, by no spell, be summoned or detained.

I hate a lecturer. I find little or no benefit in listening to a man who does not occasionally call upon me for my opinion, and allow me to canvass every step in his argument. I cannot, with any satisfaction, survey a column, how costly soever its materials, and classical its ornaments, when I am convinced that its foundation is sand which the next tide will wash away. I equally dislike formal debate, where each man, however few his ideas, is subjected to the necessity of drawing them out to the length of a speech. A single proof, or question, or hint, may be all that the state of the controversy, or the reflections of the speaker, suggest: but this must be amplified and iterated, till the sense, perhaps, is lost or enfeebled, that he may not fall below the dignity of an orator. Conversa-

tion, careless and unfettered,—that is sometimes abrupt and sententious; sometimes fugitive and brilliant; and sometimes copious and declamatory;—is a scene for which, without being much accustomed to it, I entertain great affection. It blends, more happily than any other method of instruction, utility and pleasure. No wonder I was desirous of knowing, long before the opportunity was afforded me, how far these valuable purposes were accomplished by the frequenters of Mrs. Carter's Lyceum.

In the morning I had met the doctor at the bed-side of a sick friend, who had strength enough to introduce us to each other. At parting I received a special invitation for the evening, and a general one to be in force at all other times. At five o'clock I shut up my little school, and changed an alley in the city—dark, dirty, and narrow, as all alleys are—for the fresh air and smooth footing of the fields. I had not forgotten the doctor and his Lyceum. Shall I go (said I to myself) or shall I not? "No:" said the pride of poverty, and the bashfulness of inexperience. I looked at my unpowdered locks, my worsted stockings, and my pewter buckles. I bethought me of my embarrassed air, and my uncouth gait. I pondered on the superciliousness of wealth and talents, the awfulness of flowing

muslin, the mighty task of hitting on a right movement at entrance, and a right posture in sitting, and on the perplexing mysteries of tea-table decorum; but, though confused and panic-struck, I was not vanquished.

I had some leisure, particularly in the evening. Could it be employed more agreeably or usefully? To read, to write, to meditate; to watch a declining moon, and the varying firmament, with the emotions of poetry or piety—with the optics of Dr. Young, or of De la Lande—were delightful occupations, and all at my command. Eight hours of the twenty-four were consumed in repeating the names and scrawling the forms of the alphabet, or in engraving on infantine memories that twice three make six; the rest were employed in supplying an exhausted, rather than a craving stomach; in sleep, that never knew, nor desired to know, the luxury of down, and the pomp of tissue; in unravelling the mazes of Dr. Waring; or in amplifying the seducing suppositions of, 'if I were a king,' or, 'if I were a lover.' Few, indeed, are as happy as Alcuin. What is requisite to perfect my felicity but the blessing of health, which is incompatible with periodical head-aches, and the visits of rheumatism;—of peace, which cannot maintain its post against the hum of a school, the dis-

cord of cart-wheels, and the rhetoric of a notable landlady;—of competence—my trade preserves me from starving and nakedness, but not from the discomforts of scarcity, or the disgrace of shabbiness;—of money, to give me leisure; and exercise, to give me health. These are all my lot denies: in all other respects I am the happiest of mortals. The pleasures of society, indeed, I seldom taste: that is, I have few opportunities of actual intercourse with that part of mankind whose ideas extend beyond the occurrences of the neighbourhood, or arrangements of their household. Not but that, when I want company, it is always at hand. My solitude is populous, whenever my fancy thinks proper to people it, and with the very beings that best suit my taste. These beings are, perhaps, on account of my slender experience, too uniform, and somewhat grotesque. Like some other dealers in fiction, I find it easier to give new names to my visionary friends, and vary their condition, than to introduce a genuine diversity into their characters. No one can work without materials. My stock is slender. There are timeswhen I feel a moment's regret that I do not enjoy the means of enlarging it. But this detail, it must be owned, is a little beside the purpose. I merely intended to have repeated my conversation with Mrs. Carter, but

have wandered, unawares, into a dissertation on my own character. I shall now return, and mention that I cut short my evening excursion, speeded homeward, and, after japanning anew my shoes, brushing my hat, and equipping my body in its best gear, proceeded to the doctor's house.

I shall not stop to describe the campany, or to dwell on the embarrassments and awkwardness always incident to an unpolished wight like me. Suffice it to say, that I was in a few minutes respectfully withdrawn into a corner, and fortunately a near neighbour of the lady. * * * * * * *

A week elapsed, and I repeated my visit to Mrs. Carter. She greeted me in a friendly manner. "I have often," said she, "since I saw you, reflected on the subject of our former conversation: I have meditated more deeply than common, and I believe to more advantage. The hints that you gave me, I have found useful guides."

"And I, said I, have travelled farther than common, incited by a laudable desire of knowledge."

"Travelled?"

"Yes: I have visited, since I saw you, the *Paradise of Women;* and I assure you have longed for an opportunity to communicate the information that I have collected."

"Well, you now enjoy the opportunity—you have engaged it every day in the week. Whenever you had thought proper to come, I could have promised you a welcome."

"I thank you. I should have claimed your welcome sooner, but only returned this evening."

"Returned! Whence, I pr'ythee?"

"From the journey that I spoke of. Have I not told you that I have visited the Paradise of Women? The region, indeed, is far distant; but a twinkling is sufficient for the longest of my journeys."

"You are somewhat mysterious: and mystery is one of the many things that abound in the world, for which I have a hearty aversion."

"I cannot help it. It is plain enough to me and to my good genius; who, when I am anxious to change the scene, and am unable to perform it by the usual means, is kindly present to my prayers, and saves me from three inconveniences of travelling—toil, delay, and expense. What sort of vehicle it is that he provides for me—what intervals of space I have overpassed—and what is the situation of the inn where I repose, relatively to this city, or this orb—such is the rapidity with which I move, that I cannot collect from my own observation. I may sometimes remedy my ignorance in this respect by a com-

parison of circumstances: for example, the language of the people with whom I passed most of the last week, was English: this was a strong symptom of affinity. In other respects the resemblance was sufficiently obscure. Methought I could trace in their buildings the knowledge of Greek and Roman models: but who can tell that the same images and combinations may not occur to minds distant and unacquainted with each other, but which have been subject to the same enlightened discipline? In manners and sentiments, they possessed little, in common with us. Here I confess my wonder was most excited. I should have been apt to suspect that they were people of some other planet; especially as I had never met in my reading with any intimations of the existence of such a people on our own. But, on looking around me, the earth and sky exhibited the same appearances as with us. It once occurred to me, that I had passed the bourne which we are all doomed to pass, and had reached that spot from which, as the poet assures, no traveller returns. But since I have returned, I must discard that supposition. You will say, perhaps, when you are acquainted with particulars, that it was no more than a sick man's dream, or a poet's reverie. Though I myself cannot adopt this opinion (for who can discredit

the testimony of his senses?) yet it must be owned that it would most naturally suggest itself to another; and therefore I shall leave you in possession of it."

"So, you would persuade me," said the lady, "that the journey you meant to relate, is in your own opinion real; though you are conscious that its improbability will hinder others from believing it."

"If my statement answer that end, be it so. The worst judge of the nature of his own conceptions is the enthusiast. I have my portion of ardour, which solitude seldom fails to kindle into blaze. It has drawn vigour and activity from exercise. Whether it transgresses the limits which a correct judgment prescribes, it would be absurd to inquire of the enthusiast himself. If the perceptions of the poet be as lively as those of sense, it is a superfluous inquiry whether their objects exist really, and externally. This is a question which cannot be decided, even with respect to those perceptions which have most seeming and most congruity. We have no direct proof that the ordinary objects of sight and touch have a being independent of these senses. When there is no ground for believing that those chairs and tables have any existence but in my own sensorium, it would be rash to

affirm the reality of the objects which I met, or seemed to meet with, in my late journey. I see and hear, is the utmost that can be truly said at any time. All that I can say is—that I saw and heard."

"Well," returned the lady, "that as you say, is a point of small importance. Let me know what you saw and heard without further ceremony."

"I was witness to the transactions of a people, who would probably gain more of your approbation than those around you can hope for. Yet this is, perhaps, to build too largely on my imperfect knowledge of your sentiments: however that be, few things offered themselves to my observation, which I did not see reason to applaud, and to wonder at.

"My curiosity embraced an ample field. It did not overlook the condition of women. That negligence had been equally unworthy of my understanding and my heart. It was evening and the moon was present when I lighted, I know not how or whence, on a smooth pavement encompassed by structures that appeared intended for the accommodation of those whose taste led them either to studious retirement or to cheerful conversation. I shall not describe the first transports of my amazement, or dwell

on the reflections that were suggested by a transition so new and uncommon, or the means that I employed to penetrate the mysteriousness that hung around every object, and my various conjectures as to the position of the isle, or the condition of the people among whom I had fallen. I need not tell how, in wandering from this spot, I encountered many of both sexes who were employed in awakening, by their notes, the neighbouring echoes, or absorbed in musing silence, or engaged in sprightly debate; how one of them remarking, as I suppose, the perplexity of my looks, and the uncouthness of my garb, accosted me and condescended to be my guide in a devious tract, which conducted me from one scene of enchantment to another. I need not tell how, by the aid of this benevolent conductor, I passed through halls whose pendent lustres exhibited sometimes a groupe of musicians and dancers, sometimes assemblies where state affairs were the theme of sonorous rhetoric, where the claims of ancient patriots and heroes to the veneration of posterity were examined, and the sources of memorable revolutions scrutinized, or which listened to the rehearsals of annalist or poet, or surveyed the labours of the chemist, or inspected the performances of the mechanical inventor. Need I expatiate on the felicity of that plan,

which blended the umbrage of poplars with the murmur of fountains, enhanced by the gracefulness of architecture?"

"Come, come," interrupted the lady, "this perhaps may be poetry, but though pleasing, it had better be dispensed with. I give you leave to pass over these incidents in silence: I desire merely to obtain the sum of your information, disembarrassed from details of the mode in which you acquired it, and of the mistakes and conjectures to which your ignorance subjected you."

"Well," said I, "these restraints, it must be owned, are a little hard, but since you are pleased to impose them I must conform to your pleasure. After my curiosity was sufficiently gratified by what was to be seen, I retired with my guide to his apartment. It was situated on a terrace which overlooked a mixed scene of groves and edifices, which the light of the moon that had now ascended the meridian, had rendered distinctly visible. After considerable discourse, in which satisfactory answers had been given to all the inquiries which I had thought proper to make, I ventured to ask, 'I pray thee, my good friend, what is the condition of the female sex among you? In this evening's excursion I have met with those, whose faces and voices seemed

to bespeak them women, though as far as I could discover they were distinguished by no peculiarities of manners or dress. In those assemblies to which you conducted me, I did not fail to observe, that whatever was the business of the hour, both sexes seemed equally engaged in it. Was the spectacle theatrical? The stage was occupied sometimes by men, sometimes by women, and sometimes by a company of each. The tenor of the drama seemed to be followed as implicitly as if custom had enacted no laws upon this subject. Their voices were mingled in the chorusses: I admired the order in which the spectators were arranged. Women were, to a certain degree, associated with women, and men with men; but it seemed as if magnificence and symmetry had been consulted, rather than a scrupulous decorum. Here no distinction in dress was observable, but I suppose the occasion dictated it. Was science, or poetry, or art, the topic of discussion? The two sexes mingled their inquiries and opinions. The debate was managed with ardour and freedom, and all present were admitted to a share in the controversy, without particular exceptions or compliances of any sort. Were shadows and recesses sought by the studious few? As far as their faces were distinguishable, meditation had selected her

votaries indiscriminately. I am not unaccustomed to some degree of this equality among my own countrymen, but it appears to be far more absolute and general among you; pray what are your customs and institutions on this head?'

"'Perhaps,' replied my friend, 'I do not see whither your question tends. What are our customs respecting women? You are doubtless apprised of the difference that subsists between the sexes. That physical constitution which entitles some of us to the appellation of male, and others to that of female, you must know. You know its consequences. With these our customs and institutions have no concern; they result from the order of nature, which it is our business merely to investigate. I suppose there are physiologists or anatomists in your country. To them it belongs to explain this circumstance of animal existence.

"'The universe consists of individuals. They are perishable. Provision has been made that the place of those that perish should be supplied by new generations. The means by which this end is accomplished, are the same through every tribe of animals. Between contemporary beings the distinction of sex maintains; but the end of this distinction is, that since each individual must perish, there may be a continual succession

of individuals. If you seek to know more than this, I must refer you to books which contain the speculations of the anatomist, or to the hall where he publicly communicates his doctrines.'

" ' It is evident,' answered I, ' that I have not made myself understood. I did not inquire into the structure of the human body, but into those moral or political maxims which are founded on the difference in this structure between the sexes.

" ' Need I repeat,' said my friend, ' what I have told you of the principles by which we are governed? I am aware that there are nations of men universally infected by error, or who, at least, entertain opinions different from ours. It is hard to trace all the effects of a particular belief, which chances to be current among a whole people. I have entered into a pretty copious explanation of the rules to which we conform in our intercourse with each other, but still perhaps have been deficient.

" ' No, I cannot complain of your brevity; perhaps my doubts would be solved, by reflecting attentively on the information that I have already received. For that, leisure is requisite; meanwhile, I cannot but confess my surprise, that I find among you, none of those exterior differ-

ences by which the sexes are distinguished by all other nations.'

"'Give me a specimen, if you please, of those differences with which you have been familiar.'

"'One of them,' said I, 'is dress. Each sex has a garb peculiar to itself. The men and women of our country are more different from each other in this respect, than the natives of remotest countries.'

"'That is strange,' said my friend, 'why is it so?'

"'I know not. Each one dresses as custom prescribes. He has no other criterion. If he selects his garb because it is beautiful or convenient, it is beautiful and commodious in his eyes merely because it is customary.'

"'But wherefore does custom prescribe a different dress to each sex?'

"'I confess I cannot tell, but most certainly it is so. I must likewise acknowledge, that nothing in your manners more excites my surprise, than your uniformity in this particular.'

"'Why should it be inexplicable? For what end do we dress? Is it for the sake of ornament? Is it in compliance with our perceptions of the beautiful? These perceptions cannot be supposed to be the same in all. But since the standard of beauty, whatever it be, must be one and

the same: since our notions on this head are considerably affected by custom and example, and since all have nearly the same opportunites and materials of judgment, if beauty only were regarded, the differences among us would be trivial. Differences, perhaps, there would be. The garb of one being would, in some degree, however small, vary from that of another. But what causes there are that should make all woman agree in their preference of one dress, and all men in that of another, is incomprehensible; no less than that the difference resulting from this choice should be essential and conspicuous.

"'But ornament obtains no regard from us but in subservience to utility. We find it hard to distinguish between the useful and beautiful. When they appear to differ, we cannot hesitate to prefer the former. To us that instrument possesses an invincible superiority to every other which is best adapted to our purpose. Convince me that this garment is of more use than that, and you have determined my choice. We may afterwards inquire, which has the highest pretensions to beauty? Strange if utility and beauty fail to coincide. Stranger still, if having found them in any instance compatible, I sacrifice the former to the latter. But the elements of beauty, though perhaps they have a real existence, are

fleeting and inconstant. Not so those principles which enable us to discover what is useful. These are unform and permanent. So must be the results. Among us, what is useful to one, must be equally so to another. The condition of all is so much alike, that a stuff which deserves the preference of one, because it is obtained with least labour, because its texture is most durable, or more easily renewed or cleansed, is for similar reasons preferable to all.

"'But,' said I, 'you have various occupations. One kind of stuff or one fashion is not equally suitable to every employment. This must produce a variety among you, as it does among us.'

"'It does so. We find that our tools must vary with our designs. If the task requires a peculiar dress, we assume it. But as we take it up when we enter the workshop, we, of course, lay it aside when we change the scene. It is not to be imagined that we wear the same garb at all times. No man enters society laden with the implements of his art. He does not visit the council-hall or the theatre with his spade upon his shoulder. As little does he think of bringing thither the garb which he wore in the field. There are no such peculiarities of attitude or gesture among us, that the vesture that has proved most convenient to one in walking or sitting,

should be found unsuitable to others. Do the differences of this kind, prevalent among you, conform to these rules? Since every one has his stated employment, no doubt each one has a dress peculiar to himself or those of his own profession.'

"'No. I cannot say that among us this principle has any extensive influence. The chief difference consists in degrees of expensiveness. By inspecting the garb of a passenger, we discover not so much the trade that he pursues, as the amount of his property. Few labour whose wealth allows them to dispense with it. The garb of each is far from varying with hours of the day. He need only conform to the changes of the seasons, and model his appearance by the laws of ostentation, in public, and by those of ease, in the intervals of solitude. These principles are common to both sexes. Small is the portion of morality or taste, that is displayed by either, but in this, as in most other cases, the conduct of the females is the least faulty. But of all infractions of decorum, we should deem the assuming of the dress of one sex by the other, as the most flagrant. It so rarely happens, that I do not remember to have witnessed a single metamorphosis, except perhaps on the stage, and even there a female cannot evince a more egre-

gious negligence of reputation than by personating a man.'

"'All this,' replied my friend, 'is so strange as to be almost incredible. Why beings of the same nature, inhabiting the same spot, and accessible to the same influences, should exhibit such preposterous differences, is wonderful. It is not possible that these modes should be equally commodious or graceful. Custom may account for the continuance, but not for the origin, of manners.'

"'The wonder that you express,' said I, 'is in its turn a subject of surprise to me. What you now say, induces me to expect that among you, women and men are more similarly treated than elsewhere. But this, to me, is so singular a spectacle, that I long to hear it more minutely described by you, and to witness it myself.'

"'If you remain long enough among us you will not want the opportunity. I hope you will find that every one receives that portion which is due to him; and since a diversity of sex cannot possibly make any essential difference in the claims and duties of reasonable beings, this difference will never be found. But you call upon me for descriptions. With what hues shall I delineate the scene? I have exhibited as distinctly as possible the equity that governs us.

Its maxims are of various application. They regulate our conduct, not only to each other, but to the tribes of insects and birds. Every thing is to be treated as capable of happiness itself, or as instrumental to the happiness of others.'

"'But since the sexual difference is something,' said I, 'and since you are not guilty of the error of treating different things as if they were the same, doubtless, in your conduct towards each other, the consideration of sex is of some weight.'

"'Undoubtedly. A species of conduct is incumbent upon men and women towards each other on certain occasions, that cannot take place between man and man; or between woman and woman. I may properly supply my son with a razor to remove superfluous hairs from his chin; but I may with no less propriety forbear to furnish my daughter with this implement, because nature has denied her a beard; but all this is so evident that I cannot but indulge a smile at the formality with which you state it.'

"'But,' said I, 'it is the nature and extent of this difference of treatment that I want to know.'

"'Be explicit, my good friend. Do you want a physiological dissertation on this subject, or not? If you do, excuse me from performing the task, I am unequal to it.'

"'No. But I will try to explain myself: What,

for example, is the difference which takes place in the education of the two sexes.

" ' There is no possible ground for difference. Nourishment is imparted and received in the same way. Their organs of digestion and secretion are the same. There is one diet, one regimen, one mode and degree of exercise, best adapted to unfold the powers of the human body, and maintain them for the longest time in full vigour. One individual may be affected by some casualty or disease, so as to claim to be treated in a manner different from another individual, but this difference is not necessarily connected with sex. Neither sex is exempt from injury, contracted through their own ignorance, or that of others. Doubtless the sound woman and the sick man it would be madness to subject to the same tasks, or the same regimen. But this is no less true if both be of the same sex. Diseases, on whichsoever they fall, are curable by the same means.

" ' Human beings, in their infancy,' continued my friend, ' require the same tendance and instruction: but does one sex require more or less, or a different sort of tendance or instruction than the other? Certainly not. If by any fatal delusion, one sex should imagine its interest to consist in the ill-treatment of the other, time would

soon detect their mistake. For how is the species to be continued? How is a woman, for example, to obtain a sound body, and impart it to her offspring, but, among other sources, from the perfect constitution of both her parents? But it is needless to argue on a supposition so incredible as that mankind can be benefited by injustice and oppression.

"'Would we render the limbs supple, vigorous and active? And are there two modes equally efficacious of attaining this end? Must we suppose that one sex will find this end of less value than the other, or the means suitable to its attainment different? It cannot be supposed.

"'We are born with faculties that enable us to impart and receive happiness. There is one species of discipline better adapted than any other to open and improve those faculties. This mode is to be practised. All are to be furnished with the means of instruction, whether these consist in the direct commerce of the senses with the material universe, or in intercourse with other intelligent beings. It is requisite to know the reasonings, actions and opinions of others, if we seek the improvement of our own understanding. For this end we must see them, and talk with them, if present, or if distant or dead, we must consult these memorials which have been con-

trived by themselves or others. These are simple and intelligible maxims proper to regulate our treatment of rational beings. The only circumstance to which we are bound to attend, is, that the subjects of instruction be rational. If any one observe that the consideration of sex is of some moment, how must his remark be understood? Would he insinuate, that because my sex is different from yours, one of us only can be treated as rational, or that though reason be a property of both, one of us possesses less of it than the other? I am not born among a people who can countenance so monstrous a doctrine.

" ' No two persons are entitled, in the strictest sense, to the same treatment, because no two can be precisely alike. All the possibilities and shades of difference no human capacity can estimate. Observation will point out some of the more considerable sources of variety. Man is a progressive being, he is wise in proportion to the number of his ideas, and to the accuracy with which he compares and arranges them. These ideas are received through the inlets of his senses. They must be successively received. The objects which suggest them, must be present. There must be time for observation. Hence the difference is, in some degree, uniform between the old and the young: between those,

the sphere of whose observation has been limited, and those whose circle is extensive. Such causes of difference as these are no less incident to one sex than to the other. The career of both commences in childhood and ignorance. How far and how swiftly they may proceed before their steps are arrested by disease, or death, is to be inferred from a knowledge of their circumstances: such as betide them simply as individuals.

"'It would, perhaps, be unreasonable to affirm that the circumstance of sex affects in no degree the train of ideas in the mind. It is not possible that any circumstance, however trivial, should be totally without mental influence; but we may safely affirm that this circumstance is indeed trivial, and its consequences, therefore, unimportant. It is inferior to most other incidents of human existence, and to those which are necessarily incident to both sexes. He who resides among hills, is a different mortal from him who dwells on a plain. Subterranean darkness, or the seclusion of a valley, suggest ideas of a kind different from those that occur to us on the airy verge of a promontory, and in the neighbourhood of roaring waters. The influence on my character which flows from my age, from the number and quality of my associates, from the nature of my dwelling-place, as sultry or cold

fertile or barren, level or diversified, the art that I cultivate, the extent or frequency of my excursions cannot be of small moment. In comparison with this, the qualities which are to be ascribed to my sex are unworthy of being mentioned. No doubt my character is in some degree tinged by it, but the tinge is inexpressibly small.'

"'You give me leave to conclude, then,' said I, 'that the same method of education is pursued with regard to both sexes?'

"'Certainly,' returned my philosopher. 'Men possess powers that may be drawn forth and improved by exercise and discipline. Let them be so, says our system. It contents itself with prescribing certain general rules to all that bear the appellation of human. It permits all to refresh and invigorate their frames, by frequenting the purest streams and the pleasantest fields, and by practising those gestures and evolutions that tend to make us robust and agile. It admits the young to the assemblies of their elders, and exhorts the elder to instruct the young. It multiplies the avenues, and facilitates the access to knowledge. Conversations, books, instruments, specimens of the productions of art and nature, haunts of meditation, and public halls, liberal propensities and leisure, it is the genius of our

system to create, multiply, and place within the reach of all. It is far from debasing its views, by distinguishing those who dwell on the shore from those that inhabit the hills; the beings whom a cold temperature has bleached, from those that are embrowned by a hot.'

"'But different persons,' said I, 'have different employments. Skill cannot be obtained in them without a regular course of instruction. Each sex has, I doubt not, paths of its own, into which the others must not intrude: hence must arise a difference in their education.'

"'Who has taught you,' replied he, 'that each sex must have peculiar employments? Your doubts and your conjectures are equally amazing. One would imagine, that among you, one sex had more arms, or legs, or senses, than the other. Among us, there is no such inequality: the principles that direct us in the choice of occupations are common to all.'

"'Pray tell me,' said I, 'what these principles are.

"'They are abundantly obvious. There are some tasks which are equally incumbent upon all. These demand no more skill and strength than is possessed by all. Men must provide themselves, by their own efforts, with food, clothing, and shelter. As long as they live to-

gether, there is a duty obliging them to join their skill and their exertions for the common benefit. A certain portion of labour will supply the needs of all: this portion then must be divided among all: each one must acquire and exert the skill which this portion requires. But this skill and this strength are found, by experience, to be moderate, and easily attained. To plant maize—to construct an arch—to weave a garment—are no such arduous employments, but that all who have emerged from the infirmity and ignorance of childhood, may contribute their efforts to the performance.

"But, beside occupations which are thus of immediate and universal utility, there is an infinite variety of others. The most exquisite of all calamities results from a vacant mind, and unoccupied limbs. The highest pleasure demands the ceaseless activity of both. To enjoy this pleasure, it is requisite to find some other occupation of our time, beside those which are enjoined by the physical necessities of our nature. Among these there is ample room for choice. The motives that may influence us in this choice, are endless. I shall not undertake to enumerate them: you can be at no loss to conceive them without my assistance. But whether they be solitary or social—whether speech, or books, or observation,

or experiment, be the medium of instruction—there can be nothing in the distinction of sex to influence our determinations; or this influence is so inconsiderable, as not to be worth mention.

"'What!' cried I, 'are all obliged to partake of all the labours of tilling the ground, without distinction of rank and sex?'

"'Certainly. There are none that fail to consume some portion of the product of the ground. To exempt any from a share in the cultivation, would be an inexpiable injustice, both to those who are exempted, and those who are not exempted. The exercise is cheerful and wholesome—its purpose is just and necessary. Who shall dare to deny me a part in it? But we know, full well, that the task which, if divided among many, is easy and salubrious, is converted into painful and unwholesome drudgery, by being confined to a sex. What phrenzy must that be, which should prompt us to introduce a change in this respect? I cannot even imagine so great a perversion of the understanding. Common madness is unequal to so monstrous a conception. We must first not only cease to be reasonable—but cease to be men. Even that supposition is insufficient: for into what class of animals must we sink, before this injustice could be realized? Among beasts, there are none who

do not owe their accommodations to their own exertions.

" ' Food is no less requisite to one sex than to the other. As the necessity of food—so the duty of providing it is common. But the reason why I am to share in the labour, is not merely because I am to share in the fruits. I am a being, guided by reason and susceptible of happiness—so are other men. It is, therefore, a privilege that I cannot relinquish, to promote and contemplate the happiness of others. After the cravings of necessity are satisfied, it remains for me, by a new application of my powers, to enlarge the pleasures of existence. The inlets to this pleasure are numberless. What can prompt us to take from any the power of choosing among these, or to incapacitate him from choosing with judgment? The greater the number of those who are employed in administering to pleasure, the greater will be the product. Since both sexes partake of this capacity, what possible reasons can there be for limiting or precluding the efforts of either?

" ' What I conceive to be unjust, may yet be otherwise; but my actions will conform to my opinions. If you would alter the former, you must previously introduce a change into the latter. I know the opinions of my countrymen.

The tenor of their actions will conform to their notions of right. Can the time ever come, will the power ever arise, that shall teach them to endure the oppression of injustice themselves, or inflict it upon others? No.'

"'But, in my opinion,' said I, 'the frame of women is too delicate, their limbs too minute for rough and toilsome occupations. I would rather confine them to employments more congenial to the female elements of softness and beauty.'

"'You would rather, would you? I will suppose you sincere, and inquire how you would expect to obtain their consent to your scheme.'

"'The sentiments,' said I, 'of a single individual, would avail nothing. But if all the males should agree to prescribe their employments to women—'

"'What then?' interrupted my friend. 'There are but two methods of effecting this end—by force or by persuasion. With respect to force, we cannot suppose human beings capable of it, for any moral purpose; but supposing them capable, we would scarcely resort to force, while our opponents are equal in number, strength and skill to ourselves. The efficacy of persuasion is equally chimerical. That frailty of mind which should make a part of mankind willing to take upon themselves a double portion of the

labour, and to convert what is pleasurable exercise to all, into a source of pain and misery to a few—But these are vain speculations; let us dismiss them from our notice.'

"'Willingly, said I; 'we will dismiss these topics for the sake of one more important.—I presume then,' continued I, 'there is such a thing as marriage among you.'

"'I do not understand the term.'

"'I use it to express that relation which subsists between two human beings in consequence of difference of sex.'

"'You puzzle me exceedingly,' returned he. 'You question me as to the existence of that concerning which it is impossible for you to be ignorant. You cannot at this age be a stranger to the origin of human existence.'

When I had proceeded thus far in my narrative, I paused. Mrs. Carter still continued to favour me with her attention. On observing my silence, she desired me to proceed.

"I presume," said she, "your supernatural conductor allowed you to finish the conversation. To snatch you away just now, in the very midst of your subject, would be doing you and me likewise a very unacceptable office. I beseech you go on with the discourse."

"It may not be proper," answered I. "This is

a topic on which, strange to tell, we cannot discourse in the same terms before every audience." The remainder of our conversation decorum would not, perhaps, forbid you to read, but it prohibits you from hearing. If you wish it, I will give you the substance of the information I collected on this topic in writing.

"What is improper to be said in my hearing," said the lady, "it should seem, was no less improper to be knowingly addressed to me by the pen."

"Then," said I, "you do not assent to my offer."

"Nay, I do not refuse my assent. I merely object to the distinction, that you have raised. There are many things improper to be uttered, or written, or to be read, or listened to, but the impropriety methinks must adhere to the sentiments themselves, and not result from the condition of the author or his audience."

"Are these your real sentiments?"

"Without doubt. But they appear not to be yours. However, write what you please; I promise you to read it, and to inform you of my opinion respecting it. Your scheme, I suspect, will not be what is commonly called marriage, but something, in your opinion, better. This footing is a dubious one. Take care, it is difficult to touch without overstepping the verge."

"Your caution is reasonable. I believe si-

lence will be the safest." You will excuse me, therefore, from taking up the pen on this occasion. The ground, you say, and I believe, is perilous. It will be most prudent to avoid it."

"As you please, but remember, that though I may not approve of what you write, your silence I shall approve still less. If it be false, it will enable me at least to know you, and I shall thereby obtain an opportunity of correcting your mistakes. Neither of these purposes are trivial. Are you not aware that no future declaration of yours will be more unfavourable than what you have just said, that silence will be most safe? You are afraid, no doubt, of shocking too greatly my prejudices; but you err. I am certainly prepossessed in favour of the system of marriage, but the strength of this prepossession will appear only in the ardour of my compassion for contrary opinions, and the eagerness of my endeavours to remove them."

"You would condescend then," said I, "to reason on the subject, as if it were possible that marriage was an erroneous institution; as if it were possible that any one could seriously maintain it to be so, without entitling himself to the imputation of the lowest profligacy. Most women would think that the opponent of marriage, either assumed the character for the most odious

and selfish purposes, and could therefore only deserve to be treated as an assassin, to be detested and shunned: or if he were sincere in his monstrous faith, that all efforts to correct his mistakes would avail nothing with respect to the patient, but might endanger the physician by exposing her to the illusions of sophistry or the contagion of passion."

"I am not one of these," said the lady. "The lowest stupidity only can seek its safety in shutting its ears. We may call that sophistry, which having previously heard, it fails to produce conviction. Yet sophistry perhaps, implies not merely fallacious reasoning, but a fallaciousness of which the reasoner himself is apprised. If so, few charges ought to be made with more caution. But nothing can exceed the weakness that prevents us from attending to what is going to be urged against our opinions, merely from the persuasion that what is adverse to our preconceptions must be false. Yet there are examples of this folly among our acquaintance. 'You are wrong,' said I, lately, to one of these; 'if you will suffer me, I will convince you of your error.' 'You may save yourself the trouble,' she answered. 'You may torment me with doubts; but why, when I see the truth clearly already, should I risk the involving of it in obscurity?' I

repeat, I am not of this class. Force is to be resisted by force, or eluded by flight: but he that argues, whatever be his motives, should be encountered with argument. He cannot commit a greater error than to urge topics, the insufficiency of which is known to himself. To demonstrate this error is as worthy of truth as any other province. To sophistry, in any sense of the term, the proper antidote is argument. Give me leave to take so much interest in your welfare, as to desire to see your errors corrected, and to contribute what is in my power to that end. If I know myself so well as sometimes to listen to others in the hope of profiting by their superior knowledge or sagacity, permit me likewise to be just to myself in other respects, and to believe myself capable sometimes of pointing out his mistakes to another."

"You seem," said I, "to think it certain that we differ in opinion upon this topic."

"No. I merely suspect that we do. A class of reasoners has lately arisen, who aim at the deepest foundation of civil society. Their addresses to the understanding have been urged with no despicable skill. But this was insufficient; it was necessary to subdue our incredulity, as to the effects of their new maxims, by exhibiting those effects in detail, and winning our assent to their truth by engrossing the fancy and

charming the affections. The journey that you have lately made, I merely regard as an excursion into their visionary world. I can trace the agreement of the parts which you have unfolded, with those which are yet to come; and can pretty well conjecture of what hues, and lines, and figures the remainder of the picture is intended to consist."

"Then," said I, "the task that I enjoined on myself is superfluous. You are apprised of all that I mean to say on the topic of marriage, and have already laid in an ample stock of disapprobation for my service."

"I frankly confess that I expect not to approve the matter of your narrative, however pleased I may be with the manner. Nevertheless I wish you to execute your first design, that I may be able to unveil the fallacy of your opinions, and rescue one whom I have no reason to disrespect, from specious but fatal illusions."

"Your purpose is kind. It entitles you at least to my thanks. Yet to say truth, I did not at first despair of your concurrence with me in some of my opinions. I imagined that some of the evils of marriage had not escaped you. I recollect that during our last conversation, you arraigned with great earnestness the injustice of condemning women to obey the will, and depend upon the bounty, of father or husband.

"Come, come," interrupted the lady, with a se-

verer aspect; "if you mean to preserve my good opinion, you must tread on this ground with more caution. Remember the atrociousness of the charge you would insinuate. What! because a just indignation at the iniquities that are hourly committed on one-half of the human species rises in my heart, because I vindicate the plainest dictates of justice, and am willing to rescue so large a potion of human-kind, from so destructive a bondage—a bondage, not only of the hands, but of the understanding; which divests them of all those energies which distinguish man from the basest animals, destroys all perception of moral rectitude, and reduces its subjects to so calamitous a state, that they adore the tyranny that rears its crest over them, and kiss the hand that loads them with ignominy! When I demand an equality of conditions among beings that equally partake of the same divine reason, would you rashly infer that I was an enemy to the institution of marriage itself? Where shall we look for human beings who surpass all others in depravity and wretchedness? Are they not to be found in the haunts of female licentiousness? If their vice admits of a darker hue, it would receive it from the circumstance of their being dissolute by theory; of their modelling voluptuousness into a speculative system. Yet this is the charge you

would make against me. You would brand me as an enemy to marriage, not in the sense that a vestal, or widow, or chaste, but deserted maid, is an enemy; not even in that sense in which the abandoned victims of poverty and temptation are enemies, but in the sense of that detestable philosophy which scoffs at the matrimonial institution itself, which denies all its pretensions to sanctity, which consigns us to the guidance of a sensual impulse, and treats as phantastic or chimerical, the sacred charities of husband, son, and brother. Beware. Imputations of this kind are more fatal in the consequences than you may be able to conceive. They cannot be indifferent to me. In drawing such inferences, you would hardly be justified by the most disinterested intentions."

"Such inferences," my dear madam, "it is far from my intention to draw. I cannot but think your alarms unnecessary. If I am an enemy to marriage, far be it from me to be the champion of sensuality. I know the sacredness of this word in the opinions of mankind; I know how liable to be misunderstood are the efforts of him who should labour to explode it. But still, is it not possible to define with so much perspicuity, and distinguish with so much accuracy, as to preclude all possibility of mistake? I believe this possible.

I deem it easy to justify the insinuation that you yourself are desirous of subverting the marriage state."

"Proceed," said the lady. "Men are at liberty to annex to words what meaning they think proper. What should hinder you, if you so please, from saying that snow is of the deepest black? Words are arbitrary. The idea that others annex to the word black, you are at liberty to transfer to the word white. But in the use of this privilege you must make your account in not being understood, and in reversing all the purposes of language.

"Well," said I, "that is yet to appear. Meanwhile, I pray you, what are *your* objections to the present system?"

"My objections are weighty ones. I disapprove of it, in the first place, because it renders the female a slave to the man. It enjoins and enforces submission on her part to the will of her husband. It includes a promise of implicit obedience and unalterable affection. Secondly, it leaves the woman destitute of property. Whatever she previously possesses, belongs absolutely to the man."

"This representation seems not to be a faithful one," said I. "Marriage leaves the wife without property, you say. How comes it, then, that

she is able to subsist? You will answer, perhaps, that her sole dependence is placed upon the bounty of her husband. But this is surely an error. It is by virtue of express laws that all property subsists. But the same laws sanction the title of a wife to a subsistence proportioned to the estate of her husband. But if law were silent, custom would enforce this claim. The husband is in reality nothing but a steward. He is bound to make provision for his wife, proportionately to the extent of his own revenue. This is a practical truth, of which every woman is sensible. It is this that renders the riches of a husband a consideration of so much moment in the eye of a prudent woman. To select a wealthy partner is universally considered as the certain means of enriching ourselves, not less when the object of our choice is a husband than when it is a wife."

"Notwithstanding all this," said the lady, "you will not pretend to affirm that marriage renders the property common?"

"May I not truly assert," rejoined I, "that the wife is legally entitled to her maintenance?"

"Yes, she is entitled to food, raiment, and shelter, if her husband can supply them. Suppose a man in possession of five thousand pounds a year; from this the wife is entitled to mainte-

nance: but how shall the remainder be administered? Is not the power of the husband, over this, absolute? Cannot he reduce himself to poverty to-morrow? She may claim a certain portion of what he has, but he may, at his own pleasure, divest himself of all that he has. He may expend it on what purposes he pleases. It is his own, and, for the use of it, he is responsible to no tribunal; but in reality, this pompous claim of his wife amounts, in most cases, to nothing. It is the discretion of the husband that must decide, as to the kind and quantity of that provision. He may be niggardly or prodigal, according to the suggestions of his own caprice. He may hasten to poverty himself, or he may live, and compel his partner to live, in the midst of wealth as if he were labouring under extreme indigence. In neither case has the wife any remedy."

"But recollect, my good friend, the husband is commonly the original proprietor. Has the wife a just claim to that, which, before marriage, belonged to her spouse?"

"Certainly not. Nor is it less true that the husband has no just claim to that, which, previously to marriage, belonged to the wife. If property were, in all respects, justly administered, if patrimonies were equally divided among offspring, and if the various avenues that lead to

the possession of property were equally accessible to both sexes, it would be found as frequently and extensively vested in one son as in the other. Marriage is productive of no consequences which justify the transfer of what either previously possessed to the other. The idea of common property is absurd and pernicious; but even this is better than poverty and dependence to which the present system subjects the female."

"But," said I, "it is not to be forgotten that the household is common. One dwelling, one table, one set of servants, may justly be sustained by a single fund: this fund may be managed by common consent. No particle of expense may accrue without the concurrence of both parties: but if there be a difference of opinion, one must ultimately decide. Why should not this be the husband? You will say that this would be unjust. I answer that, since it is necessary that power should be vested in one or the other, the injustice is inevitable. An opposite procedure would not diminish it. If this necessary power of deciding in cases of disagreement were lodged in the wife, the injustice would remain."

"But a common fund and a common dwelling are superfluous. Why is marriage to condemn two human beings to dwell under the

same roof, and to eat at the same table, and to be served by the same domestics? This circumstance alone is the source of innumerable ills. Familiarity is the sure destroyer of reverence. All the bickerings and dissentions of a married life flow from no other source than that of too frequent communication. How difficult is it to introduce harmony of sentiment, even on topics of importance, between two persons? But this difficulty is increased in proportion to the number and frequency, and the connection with our private and personal deportment of these topics.

"If two persons are condemned to cohabitation, there must doubtless be mutual accommodation. But let us understand this term. No one can sacrifice his opinions. What is incumbent upon him, in certain cases, is only to forbear doing what he esteems to be right. Now that situation is most eligible in which we are at liberty to conform to the dictates of our judgment. Situations of a different kind will frequently occur in human life. Many of them exist without any necessity. Such, in its present state, is matrimony.

"Since an exact agreement of opinions is impossible, and since the intimate and constant intercourse of a married life requires either that the parties should agree in their opinions, or

that one should forego his own resolution, what is the consequence? Controversies will incessantly arise, and must be decided. If argument be insufficient, recourse must be had to legal authority, to brute force, or servile artifices, or to that superstition that has bound itself by a promise to obey. These might be endured if they were the necessary attendants of marriage; but they are spurious additions. Marriage is a sacred institution, but it would argue the most pitiful stupidity to imagine that all those circumstances which accident and custom have annexed to it are likewise sacred: marriage is sacred, but iniquitous laws, by making it a compact of slavery, by imposing impracticable conditions, and extorting impious promises, have, in most countries, converted it into something flagitious and hateful."

"But the marriage promises," said I, "amount to this, that the parties shall love each other till death. Would you impose no restraint on wayward inclinations? Shall this contract subsist no longer that suits the wishes of either party? Would you grant, supposing you were exalted into a law-giver, an unlimited power of divorces?"

"Without the least doubt. What shadow of justice is there in restraining mankind in this particular. My liberty is precious, but of all the ways in which my liberty can be infringed,

and my actions be subjected to force, Heaven deliver me from this species of constraint. It is impossible to do justice to my feelings on this occasion. Offer me any alternative—condemn me to the workshop of an Egyptian task-master—imprison me in chains of darkness—tear me into pieces—subject me to the endless repetition of toil, and stripes, and contumelies—but allow me, I beseech you, the liberty, at least, of conjugal choice. If you prohibit my intercourse with one on whom my heart dotes, I shall not repine—the injury is inexpressibly trivial. There is scarcely an inconvenience that will be worth enduring for the sake of this prohibited good. My resources must be few, indeed, if they do not afford me consolation under this injustice. But if you subject me to the control and the nauseous caresses of one whom I hate or despise, you indeed inflict a calamity which nothing can compensate:—there is no form which your injustice can assume, more detestable and ugly than this.

"According to present modes, the servitude of a wife is the most entire and unremitting. She lays aside her fetters not for a moment. There is not an action, however minute, in which her tyrant does not assume the power of prescribing. His eyes are eternally upon her. There is no

period, however short, in which she is exempt from his cognizance—no recess, however sacred or mysterious, into which he does not intrude. She cannot cherish the friendship of a human being without his consent: she cannot dispense a charitable farthing without his connivance. The beings who owe their existence to her, are fashioned by his sole and despotic will. All their dignity and happiness is lodged in the hands that superintend their education, and prescribe their conduct, during the important periods of infancy and youth: but how they shall exist—what shall be taught, and what shall be withholden from them—what precepts they shall hear, and what examples they shall contemplate, it is his province to decide.

"A husband is proposed to me. I ruminate on these facts. I ponder on this great question—Shall I retain my liberty or not? Perhaps the evils of my present situation—the pressure of poverty—the misjudging rule of a father, or the rare qualities of him who is proposed to me—the advantages of change of place, or increase of fortune—may outweigh the evils of this state. Perhaps I rely on the wisdom of my partner. I am assured that he will, in all cases, trust to nothing but the force of reason—that his arguments will always convince, or his candour be

accessible to conviction—that he will never make his appealto personal or legal coercion—but allow me the dominion of my own conduct, when he cannot persuade me to compliance with his wishes. These considerations may induce me to embrace the offer.

"If I am not deceived—if no inauspicious revolution take place in his character—if circumstances undergo no material alteration—if I continue to love and to confide, as at the first—it is well. I cannot object to a perpetual alliance, provided it be voluntary. There is nothing, in a choice of this kind, that shall necessarily cause it to expire. This alliance will be durable in proportion to the wisdom with which it was formed, and the foresight that was exerted.

"But if a change take place—if I were deceived, and find insolence and peevishness, rigour and command, where I expected nothing but sweet equality and unalterable complaisance—or, if the character be changed—if time introduce new modes of thinking, and new systems of action to which my understanding refuses to assimilate—what is the consequence? Shall I not revoke my choice?

"The hardships of constraint in this respect are peculiarly severe upon the female. Hers is the task of submission. In every case of dis-

agreement, it is she that must yield. The man still retains, in a great degree, his independence. In the choice of his abode, his occupation, his associates, his tasks, and his pleasures, he is guided by his own judgment. The conduct of his wife, the treatment of her offspring, and the administration of her property, are consigned to him. All the evils of constraint are aggravated by the present system. But if the system were reformed—if the duties of marriage extended to nothing but occasional interviews and personal fidelity—if each retained power over their own actions, in all cases not immediately connected with the ~~sensual~~ sexual intercourse—the obligation to maintain this intercourse, after preference had ceased, would be eminently evil. Less so, indeed, than in the present state of marriage: but still it would be fertile in misery. Have you any objections to this conclusion?"

"I cannot say that I have many. You know what is commonly urged in questions of this kind. Men, in civil society, are, in most cases, subjected to a choice of evils. That which is injurious to one, or a few individuals, may yet be beneficial to the whole. In an estimate, sufficiently comprehensive, the good may overweigh the ill. You have drawn a forcible picture of the inconveniences attending the prohi-

bition of divorces. Perhaps, if entire liberty in this respect were granted, the effects might constitute a scene unspeakably more disastrous than any thing hitherto conceived."

"As how, I pray you?"

"Men endeavour to adhere with a good grace to a contract which they cannot infringe. That which is commonly termed love, is a vagrant and wayward principle. It pretends to spurn at those bounds which decorum and necessity prescribe to it, and yet, at the same time, is tamely and rigidly observant of those bounds. This passion commonly betides us when we have previously reasoned ourselves into the belief of the propriety of entertaining it. It seldom visits us but at the sober invitation of our judgment. It speedily takes its leave when its presence becomes uneasy, and its gratification ineligible or impossible. Youth and beauty, it is said, have a tendency to excite this passion, but suppose those qualities are discovered in a sister, what becomes of this tendency? Suppose the possession to be already a wife. If chance place us near an object of uncommon loveliness and we are impressed with a notion that she is single and disengaged, our hearts may be in some danger. But suppose better information has precluded this mistake, or that it is immediately

rectified, the danger in most cases, is at an end. I am married and have no power to dissolve the contract. Will this consideration have no power over my sensations in the presence of a stranger? If care, accomplishments, and inimitable loveliness attract my notice, after my lot is decided, and has chained me to one, with whom the comparison is disadvantageous, I may indulge a faint wish that my destiny had otherwise decreed; a momentary sigh at the irrevocableness of my choice, but my regrets will instantly vanish. Recollecting that my fate is indeed decided, and my lot truly irrevocable, I become cheerful and calm.

"It is true, that harmony cannot be expected to subsist for ever and in every minute instance between two persons: but how far will the consciousness that the ill is without remedy, and the condition of affairs unchangeable, tend to foster affection and generate mutual compliance.—Human beings are distinguished by nothing more than by a propensity to imitation. They contract affection and resemblance with those persons or objects that are placed near them. The force of habit, in this respect, is admirable. Even inanimate objects become, through the influence of this principle, necessary to our happiness. They that are constant companions fail

not to become, in most respects, alike, and to be linked together by the perception of this likeness. Their modes of acting and thinking might, at first, have jarred, but these modes are not, in their own nature, immutable. The benefits of concurrence, the inconveniences of opposition, and the opportunities of comparing and weighing the grounds of their differences cannot be supposed to be without some tendency to produce resemblance and sympathy."

"This is plausible," said the lady, "but what is your aim in stating these remarks? Do you mean by them to extenuate the evils that arise from restraining divorces?"

"If they contribute to that end," answered I, "it is proper to urge them. They promote a good purpose. Your picture was so terrible, that I am willing to employ any expedient for softening its hues."

"If it were just, you ought to have admitted its justice. We see the causes of these evils. They admit of an obvious remedy. A change in the opinions of a nation is all that is requisite for this end. But let us examine your pleas, or, rather, instead of reasoning on the subject, let us turn our eyes on the world and its scenes, and mark the effect of this spirit by which human beings are prompted to adopt the opinions,

and dote upon the presence of those whom accident has placed beside them. It would be absurd to deny all influence to habit and all force to reflections upon the incurableness of the evil, but what is the effect they produce? In numberless cases the married life is a scene of perpetual contention and strife. A transient observer frequently perceives this; but in cases where appearances are more specious, he that has an opportunity to penetrate the veil which hangs over the domestic scene, is often disgusted with a spectacle of varied and exquisite misery. Nothing is to be found but a disgusting train of mean compliances, despicable artifices, peevishness, recriminations, and falsehood. It is rare that fortitude and consideration are exercised by either party. Their misery is heightened by impatience and tormenting recollections, but the few whose minds are capable of fortitude, who estimate the evil at its just value, and profit by the portion of good, whatever it be, that remains to them, experience, indeed, sensations less acute, and pass fewer moments of bitterness; but it is from the unhappy that patience is demanded. This virtue does not annihilate the evil that oppresses us, but lightens it. It does not destroy in us the consciousness of privileges of which we are destitute, or of joys which have

taken their flight. Its office is to prevent these reflections from leading us to rage and despair; to make us look upon lost happiness without relapsing into phrenzy; to establish in our bosoms the empire of cold and solemn indifference.

"If the exercise of reason and the enjoyment of liberty be valuable; if the effusions of genuine sympathy, and the adherence to an unbiassed and enlightened choice, be the true element of man, what shall we think of that harmony which is the result of narrow views, and that sympathy which is the offspring of constraint?

"I know that love, as it is commonly understood, is an empty and capricious passion. It is a sensual attachment which, when unaccompanied with higher regards, is truely contemptible. To thwart it is often to destroy it, and sometimes to qualify the victims of its delusion for Bedlam. In the majority of cases it is nothing but a miserable project of affectation. The languishing and sighing lover is an object to which the errors of mankind have annexed a certain degree of reverence. Misery is our title to compassion; and to men of limited capacities the most delicious potion that can be administered is pity. For the sake of this, hundreds are annually metamorphosed into lovers. It is graceful to lan-

guish with an hopeless passion ; to court the music of sighs and the secrecy of groves. But it is to be hoped that these chimeras will, at length, take their leave of us.

" In proportion as men become wise, their pursuits will be judiciously selected, and that which they have wisely chosen will continue, for a certain period, to be the object of their choice. Conjugal fidelity and constancy will characterize the wise. But constancy is meritorious only within certain limits. What reverence is due to groundless and obstinate attachments ? It becomes me to make the best choice that circumstances will admit, but human affairs will never be reduced to that state in which the decisions of the wisest man will be immutable. Allowance must be made for inevitable changes of situation, and for the nature of man, which is essentially progressive. That is evil which hinders him from conforming to these changes, and restrains him from the exercise of his judgment.

" Let it be admitted that love is easily extinguished by reflection. Does it follow that he ought to be controlled in the choice of his companion ? Your observations imply, that he who is now married to one woman, would attach himself to another, if the law did not interpose. Where are the benefits of interposition ? Does it

increase the happiness of him that is affected by it? Will its succour be invoked by his present consort? That a man continues to associate with me, contrary to his judgment and inclination, is no subject of congratulation. If law or force oblige him to endure my society, it does not compel him to feign esteem, or dissemble hatred or indifference. If the heart of my husband be estranged from me, I may possibly regard it as an evil. If in consequence of this estrangement, we separate our persons and interests, this is a desirable consequence. This is the only palliation of which the evil is susceptible.

"It cannot be denied that certain inconveniencies result from the disunion of a married pair, according to the present system. You have justly observed that men are reduced, in most cases, to a choice of evils. Some evils are unavoidable. Others are gratuitous and wantonly incurred. The chief evils flowing from the dissolution of marriage, are incident to the female. This happens in consequence of the iniquitous and partial treatment to which women in general are subjected. If marriage were freed from all spurious obligations, the inconveniences, attending the dissolution of it, would be reduced to nothing.

"What think you," said I, "of the duty we owe to our children? Is not their happiness materially affected by this species of liberty?"

"*I cannot perceive how.* I would, however, be rightly understood: I confess that, *according to the present system, it would:* and hence arises a new objection to this system. The children suffer: but do their sufferings, even in the present state of things, outweigh the evils resulting from the impossibility of separation?—the evil that the parents endure, and the evil accruing to the offspring themselves?

"If children stand in need of the guidance and protection of their elders, and particularly of their parents, it ought to be granted. The parental relation continues, notwithstanding a divorce. Though they have ceased to be husband and wife to each other, they have not ceased to be father and mother to me. My claims on them are the same, and as forcible as ever. The ties by which they are bound to me, are not diminished by this event. My claim for subsistence is made upon their property: but this accident does not annihilate their property. If it impoverish one, the other is proportionably enriched. There is the same inclination and power to answer my claim. The judgment that consulted for my happiness and decided for me,

before their separation, is no whit altered or lessened: on the contrary, it is most likely to be improved. When relieved from the task of tormenting each other, and no longer exposed to bickerings and disappointment, they become better qualified for any disinterested or arduous office."

"But what effects," said I, "may be expected from the removal of this restraint, upon the morals of the people? It seems to open a door to licentiousness and profligacy. If marriages can be dissolved and contracted at pleasure, will not every one deliver himself up to the impulse of a lawless appetite? Would not changes be incessant? All chastity of mind, perhaps, would perish: a general corruption of manners would ensue: and this vice would pave the way for the admission of a thousand others, till the whole nation were sunk into a state of the lowest degeneracy."

"Pray thee," cried the lady, "leave this topic of declamation to the school-boys. Liberty, in this respect, would eminently conduce to the happiness of mankind. A partial reformation would be insufficient. Set marriage on a right basis, and the pest that has hitherto made itself an inmate of every house, and ravaged every man's peace, will be exterminated—the servitude

that has debased one half, and the tyranny that has depraved the other half of the human species, will be at an end."

"And with all those objections to the present regulations on this subject, you will still maintain that you are an advocate of marriage?"

"Undoubtedly I retain the term, and am justified by common usage in retaining it. No one imagines that the forms which law or custom, in a particular age or nation, may happen to annex to marriage, are essential to it. If law-givers should enlarge the privilege of divorce, and new modify the rights of property, as they are affected by marriage; should they ordain that henceforth the husband should vow obedience to the wife, in place of the former vow which the wife made to the husband; or entirely prohibit promises of any kind;—should they expunge from the catalogue of conjugal duties, that which confines them to the same dwelling; who would imagine that the institution itself were subverted? In the east, conjugal servitude has ever been more absolute than with us; and polygamy legally established: yet, who will affirm that marriage is unknown in the east. Every one knows that regulations respecting property, domestic government, and the causes of divorce, are incident to this state, and do not constitute its essence."

"I shall assent," said I, "to the truth of this statement. Perhaps I may be disposed to adventure a few steps farther than you. It appears to me, that marriage has no other criterion than custom. This term is descriptive of that mode of sexual intercourse, whatever it may be, which custom or law has established in any country. All the modifications of this intercourse that have ever existed, or can be supposed to exist, are so many species included in the general term. The question that we have been discussing is no other than this:—What species of marriage is most agreeable to justice—or, in other words, what are the principles that ought to regulate the sexual intercourse? It is not likely that any portion of mankind have reduced these principles to practice. Hence arises a second question of the highest moment—What conduct is incumbent upon me, when the species of marriage established among my countrymen does not conform to my notions of duty?"

"That, indeed," returned she, "is going farther than I am willing to accompany you. There are many conceivable modes of sexual intercourse, on which I cannot bestow the appellation of marriage: there is something which inseparably belongs to it. It is allowable to call by this name a state which comprehends,

together with these ingredients, any number of appendages. But to call a state which wants these ingredients, marriage, appears to me a perversion of language."

"I pr'ythee," said I, "what are these ingredients? You have largely expatiated on the non-esssentials of matrimony: be good enough to say what truly belongs to this state."

"Willingly," answered she. "Marriage is an union founded on free and mutual consent. It cannot exist without friendship—it cannot exist without personal fidelity. As soon as the union ceases to be spontaneous, it ceases to be just:—this is the sum. If I were to talk for months, I could add nothing to the completeness of this definition."